

CHILD PHOTOGRAPHY

LINDI MARX

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**A mini-thesis submitted towards the subject
Theory of Photography IV**

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this script is on child photography. The script covers a historical overview of child photographers, with the emphasis on the well-known child photographer Lewis Hine. The second part of the mini-thesis concerns the author's approach to child photography, including socialization aspects of child photography, as well as examples of own work.

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INTRODUCTION

Child photography walks a fine line between empathy and exploitation, between what to photograph and what not to photograph. Hard to define, the struggle is present every time a project begins. In the end, a “true” picture reflects the truth and soul of a person.

Most photo-sessions require weeks and months of photographing, plus time for personal involvement in the lives of those being photographed. It is necessary to become immersed in their lives, developing close relationships so that when I photograph, I am not a stranger or interference. There must be an element of trust between us or the story will be incomplete.

Trust allows me to be included in private moments. People know that I am their friend with or without my photographic equipment.

I had personal relationships with most of the people I photographed (on return visits I would often give photos back to them), creating a sense of trust between photographer and subject.

In addition, I have this strong desire not only to take pictures, but also to share the experiences of my subjects, and hopefully, to give something back to them through the act of recording their lives.

In this mini-thesis, the history of portraits will be discussed with special emphasis on child photographers such as Lewis Hine and Diane Arbus. It will also include a discussion of my own approach to child photography, as well as examples of my own work.

CHAPTER 1

1. HISTORY OF PORTRAITS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

What do you want them to say when they see the picture? Portraits are perhaps the most idiosyncratic branches of photography unless that prize is taken by reportage, which often consists of portraits under another, name- and the personality of the photographer can be paramount.

Successful portraits will invariably depend on the lighting methods employed, which in turn depends on the nature of the photograph- Is it a family portrait, a character photograph, an executive study?

The photograph must capture the subject's significance, whether it is the naivete of a child, the importance of a self-made man or the well-known personality of a celebrity. In each case, the lighting set-up is fundamental to achieving the correct.

Why do photographers take portraits? Some do it just for money, of course. But even the most commercial of portrait photographers must have a reason to photograph people instead of something else.

And many photographers sincerely want to capture a likeness which is more than skin deep, they want to “get under the skin” of their subject to make a psychological interpretation. The circularity of the process then becomes apparent: The portrait is as much a psychological interpretation of the photographer as of the person photographed.

There are cruel photographers and kind photographers, gentle photographers and harsh photographers, lighthearted photographers and very serious photographers.

The photographer takes portraits for one set of reasons, and the subject may sit for them for an entirely different set of reasons, and the picture is the only place where they meet.

If I can bear to do so, without feeling too self conscious or pretentious, I might therefore do well to ask myself why I take pictures? What do I want to see in them?

1.2 WELL-KNOWN CHILD PHOTOGRAPHERS

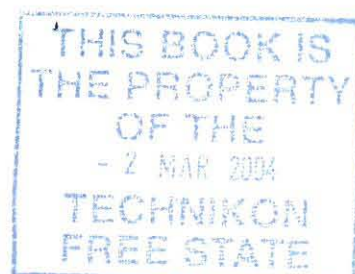
Apart from Lewis Hine, well-known portrait and child photographers in the history of photography include:

- a) Diane Arbus
- b) Lewis Carroll
- c) Nikos Economopoulos
- d) Bruno Barbey
- e) Bert Hardy

a) DIANE ARBUS (see Figure 1.1)

The grenade, grimace and claw-like hand seem to point to a desperate future hysterical and militarized. The picture works because the strangeness of the boy is staged within a kindly natural scene; there is even a rhyme between those paired tree trunks and the child's spindly legs. Arbus's subject, here and elsewhere, is the discrepancy between imagined and idealized worlds, represented here by the trees and the sunlight in the park, and the violence apparently promised by the child.

She imagined dystopia, but always regarded it from the point of view of the Garden of Eden. Arbus's example – which is known mainly through the eighty pictures published in *diane arbus* in 1972 – made a huge difference in documentary photography, even if no one was able to repeat her achievement. A student of the influential Lisette Model in New York in the late 1950s, she worked principally as a freelance magazine photographer during the 1960s.(Arbus, 1971: 26) (see also Lewis, 1967: 28)





b) LEWIS CARROLL (see Figure 1.2)

Mary Millais was the daughter of the painter John Everett Millais and Effie Gray, the former wife of John Ruskin. She has signed the picture herself. Carroll, who wrote *Alice in Wonderland* and *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, was a clergyman and mathematician who taught at Christ Church in Oxford. He took up photography in 1855 and made many pictures of children, especially girls, in his rooms at Christ church and in the gardens of friends. They were often photographed nude or in costume and were specially posed. Helmut Gernsheim, the celebrated historian of photography who first published the pictures, preferred the early images, such as this, from the 1860s. Carroll also took pictures of celebrities, including the actress Ellen Terry and the poet Alfred Lord Tennyson. Children featured greatly in the art of Pre-Raphaelite painters such as Millais, often with respect to harsh and tragic times ahead: illness and the torments of love. (Lewis, 1932: 28) (see also Braine, 1969:90, Gernsheim, 1962: 90)



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c) NIKOS ECONOMOPOULOS (see Figure 1.3)

The dog appears to have sprung from the mountains and even to stand as a giant monument to wilderness, while the windswept children below keep their eyes on the road. Economopoulos's vision, as expressed in his many pictures of the Balkans taken in the late 1980s and beyond, is of a society sufficiently de-regulated to reveal the kind of raw energies on show here. Once upon a time – or in post-war Europe – photographers had had access to this kind of quick existence, but affluence soon changed all that. The collapse of communism put it on show once again, and Economopoulos has seized his opportunity. His book of 1995, *In the Balkans* (to which this picture serves as an introduction), ranges widely and asserts cultural continuities across national boundaries. It is, in this respect, another of photography's gallant interventions on behalf of the family on man in its struggle with social norms, however enforced. (Economopoulos, 1993:35)



d) BRUNO BARBEY (see Figure 1.4)

In Naples, near the Vico Scassacocchi in the Quartiere San Lorenzo, a dwarf is begging in the midst of a group of children who respond histrionically to the beggar, to the cameraman and to each other. The participants give their all in their roles, and this has always been a trademark of Barbey's photography. Although he has photographed all over the world, including such war zones as South Vietnam in 1972, Italy has been one of his best sites, for there beggars beg and mourners mourn most fulsomely. Social breakdown may be just over the horizon, but in the meantime Barbey's personnel give themselves willingly to whatever it is they are doing at that moment. He inherited this appreciation of humanity from the generation of the 1950s – from Henri Cartier-Bresson and Robert Frank, for example-but whereas the earlier humanists often thought in representative and heroic terms, his tendency, by contrast, has always been to value the private and the particular. (Barbey, 1941: 40)



e) BERT HARDY (see Figure 1.5)

This is the most remarkable picture in Hardy's award-winning series for *Picture Post* on the Inchon landings in South Korea. On 15 September 1950 the UN forces landed at Inchon and went onto liberate Seoul. In the original caption the scene was introduced as a tragic charade from a world turned upside-down: "Its old ones caper round like crazy goats, its young ones put out more flags in a confused desire to please, its crazy infants surrender in advance...humanity...can stand no more liberations like this." Hardy set great store by a peaceful, community-based culture, and this event by a Korean roadside encapsulated everything he dreaded. Philip Jones Griffiths, another British war reporter, as a culture and community under attack, would interpret Vietnam, in the late 1960s, in a similar way. Hardy began his life in photography as a darkroom assistant and printer, but in 1940 he was taken on by *Picture Post* as a photographer. (Hardy, 1913: 50)



1.3. CHILD PHOTOGRAPHY BY LEWIS HINE

Hine's first truly innovative social-documentary works were those done on commission for the NCLC. The committee had been formed in 1905. The committee sought to call public attention to the continued widespread phenomenon of child labor and to the fact that it robbed more than two million children of the chance to enjoy an education and thus to look forward to a better life one day. The first commission Hine received during his tenure as a teacher at the Ethical Culture School in the summer of 1906 concerned the evils of home labor in New York, where according to contemporary reports at least 16000 minors were working in the district that extended south from the Bowery to 14th street. As Hine's photos show, so-called sweatshops played a major role in the home labor system. A 'sweater' was the first in a long line of profiteers who made a good living from home labor in the sweatshops. A sweatshop was a combination slum apartment and production hall, where an entire family, from the school-age child to the grandfather, worked for a few dollars per day cutting and sewing overalls, trousers, summer dresses and other items for those who could afford to pay for them. Instead of attending school, children worked twelve-hours shifts in the heat or the cold, breathing musty air and rarely seeing the light of the day. (Hine, 1937: 50)

Hine had a very definite objective in making his photographs they were to confront the public with examples of nice, lively children bravely performing their difficult work- and this in contrast to the unfriendly atmosphere, so much different from the image of lively children, that dominated in factories, glassworks, cotton mills, mines and numerous other industrial plants.

Hine wanted to submit incontrovertible evidence to the tribunal of public opinion. This meant, of course, that he had to be sure that every photograph was beyond suspicion of falsification.



1.3.1 A WELL-KNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER AND HIS TECHNIQUES

1.3.2 INTRODUCTION

This section focuses on the technique and approach to the child photography of Lewis Hine 1874-1940.

The influence of Hine's work can be found in many contemporary child photographers such as Gerhard Steenkamp who is based in Bloemfontein. For example, Steenkamp uses sepia tone photographs and uses old-fashioned clothes (e.g. caps) to create a similar mood found in Hine's documentary images.

LEWIS HINE (CHILD PHOTOGRAPHER)

Hine began by using 5x7 glass plates and then added 4x5 plates. He later carried a Graflex camera that used 4x5 film. All his photos were black and white.

TYPE OF PHOTOGRAPHS

The photographs that he took were all of a documentary character.

He took photographs of children in the depression years for which he was famous as they reflected children in their natural surroundings and state of existence.

Although there are many more photographs than negatives, not all negatives exist as prints. The photographs themselves appear in many sizes with different printing qualities, and cropping, some are contact prints.

POSITIONS

In all his photographs he does not use a 'set-up pose'. The difficult and hard life they endured is conveyed in the pictures. Lewis Hine saw every child's identity from his own childhood conditions, which they shared.

The children of the previous century differs from modern child of today, as history tells us about this lost youth (Kapp, 1990: 25)

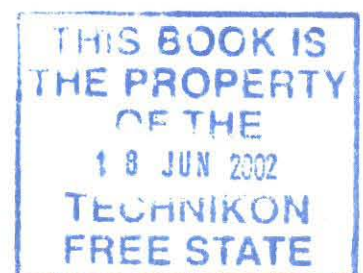




<u>FIGURE</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
Fig. 1.3a	Group of breaker boys.
Fig. 1.3b	One of many young boys on night shift in West Virginia.
Fig 1.3.3a	<p>Furman Owens, 12 years old. Can't read. He doesn't know his A,B,C. Said I want to learn but can't when I work all the time.</p> <p>"Been in the mills 4 year, 3 years in the Olympia Mill Columbia. S.C.</p>
Fig. 1.3.3b	Adolescent girls from Bibb Mfg. Co. in Macon, Georgia.
Fig. 1.3.3c	<p>Doffer boys. Macon, Georgia.</p> <p>Parents could not provide for their children as they should and therefore the children could not attend school. Children were forced to work from a very young age. Today's children have the privilege to go to a Technicon or University to attain their dreams.</p>
Fig. 1.4a	At the close of day. Waiting for the cage to go up. The cage is entirely open on two sides and not very well protected on the other two, and is usually crowded like this. The small boy in front is Jo. Puma. S. Pittston, pa.
Fig. 1.4b	View of the Ewen Breaker of the Pa. Coal Co. The dust was so dense at the time as the obscure the view. The dust penetrated the atmost recesses of the boy's lungs. A kind of slave driver sometimes stands over the boys,prodding or kicking them into a obedience. A. Pittston Pa.

<u>FIGURE</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
Fig. 1.4c	<p>Harley Bruce, a young coupling-boy at Indian Mine. He appears to be 12 or 14 years old and says he has been working there about a year. It is hard work and dangerous.</p> <p>Children worked in mines like slaves in comparison with today's children who can play outside. Depression showed on their faces as they did not earned a salary. They lifed from one day to another.</p>
Fig. 1.5a	<p>Mrs. Battaglia with Tessie, age 12, and Tony, age 7. Mrs Battaglia works in a garment shop except on Saturdays, when the children sew with her at home. Get 2 or 3 cents a pair finishing men's pants. Said they earn \$1 to \$1.50 on Saturday. Father disabled and can earn very little. New York City.</p>
Fig. 1.5b	<p>A Jewis family and neigbours working until late at night sewing garters. This happens several nights a week when there is plenty of work. The youngest work until 9 p.m. The others until 11 p.m. or later. On the left is Mary, age 7, and 10 year old Sam, and next to the mother is a 12 year old boy. On the right is Sarah, age 7, next is her 11year-old sister, 13-year-old brother. Father is out of work and also helps make garters. New York City.</p>

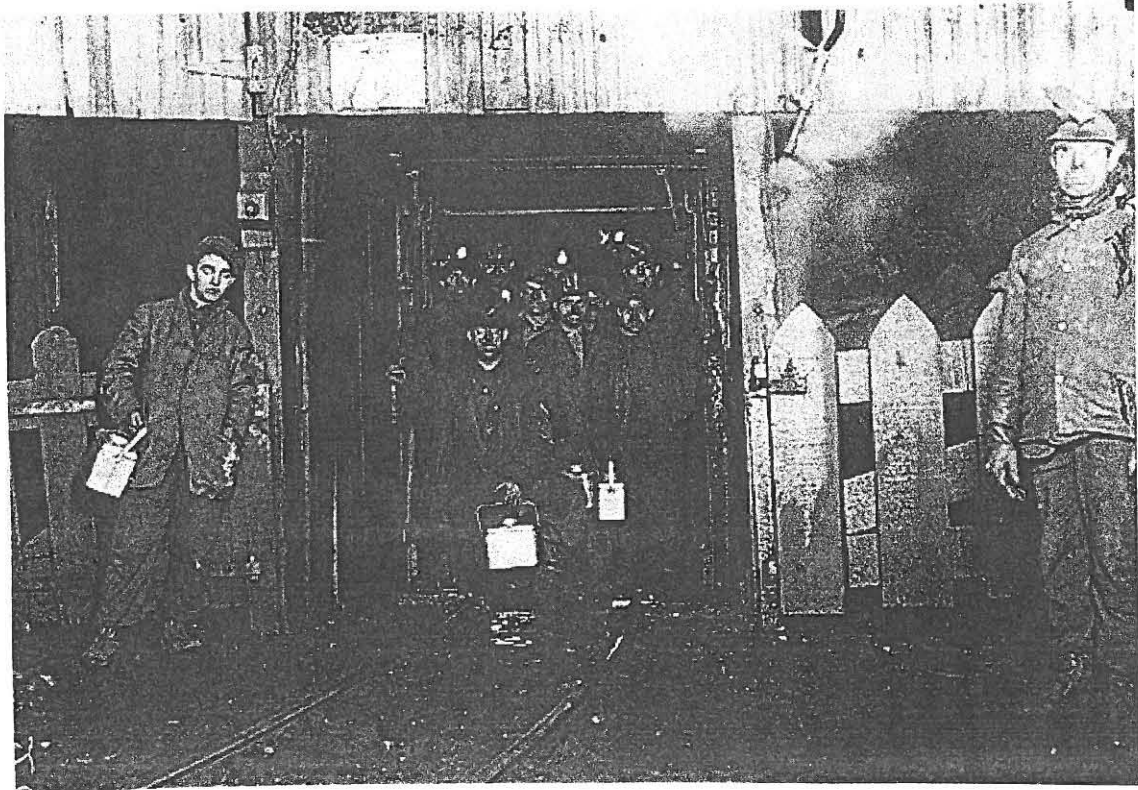
<u>FIGURE</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
Fig. 1.5c	<p>Picking nuts in dirty basement. The dirtiest imaginable children were pawing over the nuts eating lunch on the table.</p> <p>Mother had a cold and blew her nose frequently (without washing her hands) and the dirty handkerchiefs resposed comfortably on the table close to the nuts and meats. The father picks and the dirty handkerchiefs reposed comfortably on table close to the nuts and nutmeats.</p> <p>The whole family worked together to earn a living. They struggled together to put food onto the table. The children were neglected in a way not to go to school. In modern families the parents work outdoors to provide for their families while the children can attend school.</p>











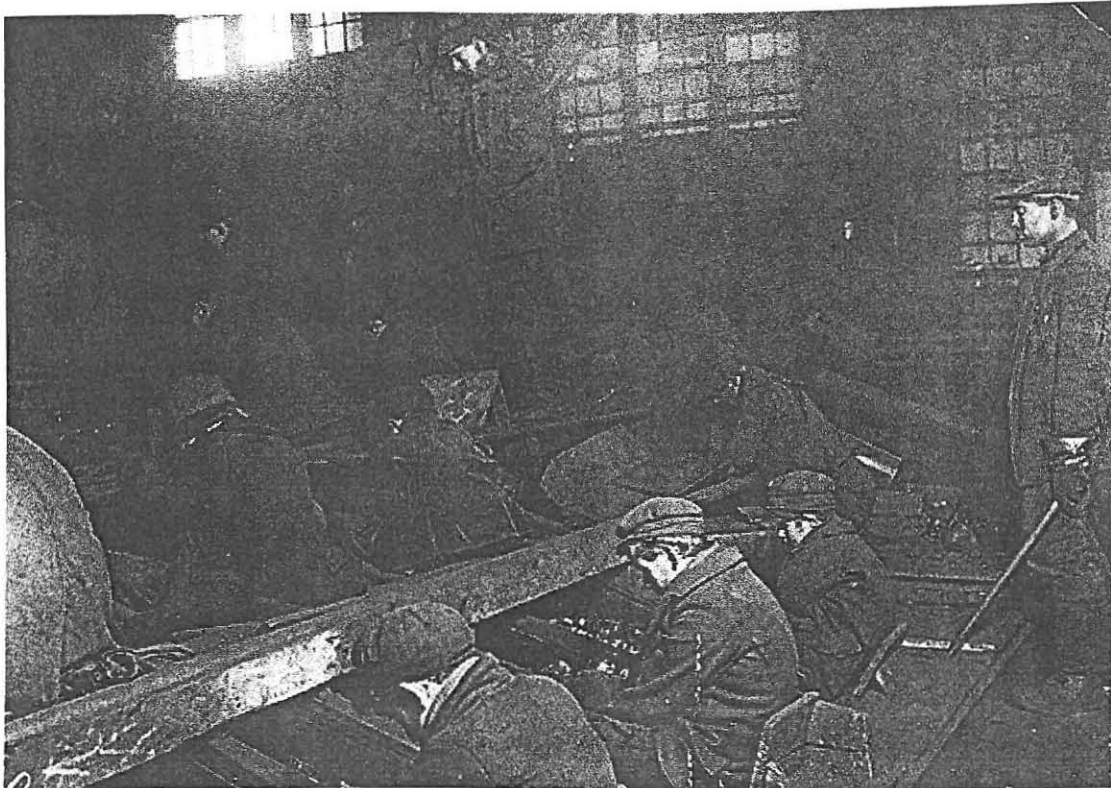


Figure 1.4c
Lewis Hine: "Miners"
Source: Passionate Journey;





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CHAPTER 2

2. PART OF THE FAMILY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the change of views of how to photograph baby's picture. After the photographer, whether it was a professional or a proud parent, had changed their attitude of thinking of the child as a small adult, the pictures of babies became more natural.

We still, even in this modern day, dress up for a photo session so, the best advice is, keep it simple, focus on what is really important.

2.1.1 CHANGING ADULT VIEW OF CHILDREN

Adults see in a child what they want to see and if they are looking at their own offspring they generally see something admirable.

Most photographs of children accurately reflect this admiration, since the person behind the camera is usually either an obliging professional or a proud parent.

Children themselves have little to say about how they are to be photographed.

As infants they cannot express their opinion, by the thousands they have submitted to nude poses on bearskin rugs or sat like precious jewels on lace pillows.

When photography was born in the first half of the last century, the majority of the adults still regarded children as little adults.

Miniature grownups, dressed and posed like their parents, impassively peer out at the viewer of early daguerreotypes.

By the 1850s and 1860s, however, when photography was in full swing, most Europeans and Americans shifted to the opinion that children were something special.

And now that the child no longer was regarded as a little adult, he became a little angel. (Kie, 1973: 52)

This is one of the most difficult pictures to photograph. A silent baby and trying to look very comfortable in the picture.

For attractive baby portraits it is worth considering three main things:

The baby's clothing, the choice of setting and how to hold him up for the camera.

As far as clothing goes, avoid the temptation to dress your baby in the most colorful and brightly patterned items available, as this will distract attention from his face and eyes, which should be the main focus of your composition.

Instead, choose plain clothes in a neutral shade a (white or blue babygrow would be ideal for the occasion). (Guide, 1982: 13)

A dribbly, messy bib should be removed just before the picture is taken.

The choice of setting for the photograph is up to you, but remember it is easier to take an attractive baby portrait using natural light, perhaps in the park or garden.

2.2 CHILD PHOTOGRAPHY

Children make endlessly fascinating subjects for photographers- both amateurs and professional alike. There is hardly a household in the land where there is not a camera of some description to be found, and in those households where children are also present, they will almost certainly become the subject of literally hundreds, if not thousands, of photographers as the years pass by.

What, then, is the universal appeal of photographing children? For parents, the answer is obvious: having a complete photographic record of their children as they grow from baby- and toddlerhood, through adolescence and teens, and on to adulthood is the perfect way of keeping their memories forever fresh.

And because children develop so very rapidly in their first few years- both physically and emotionally- and their moods are often so unpredictable and volatile- tears one moment and laughter the next- there is always another achievement or revealing facet of their character to record on film.

Photographers run into trouble in working with children when they try to make them behave like little adults. If you let a kid be a kid, you can't help but get excellent results.

The little girl playing with the fringe on her dress or playing with her hair, the little boy standing on the sides of his feet or twisting his sweater into knots, the kids playing air guitar or acting out exactly how the little engine that could make it up that steep hill. There are no tricks to making children behave like children.

There is an art, however, to earning a child's trust and helping her true personality and spirit shine through. And while children, like adults, are all individuals who respond to different things.

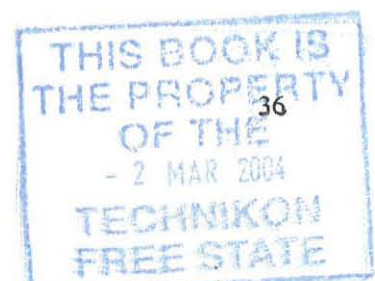
If you teach them, you can take the myth of the difficult child subject and turn it into the magic of a great photograph.

2.2.1 BABIES (3 months to 1 year)

The biggest problem with babies is that their inner clocks can change very quickly, so if you book a shoot too far in advance, you're in danger of interfering with nap time, or lunch, or a plain old crabby mood.

Encourage the parents to reschedule if it looks as if the appointment is going to fall at a bad time. It'll just be a waste of everyone's time and energy if baby is tired, hungry, cutting a tooth, or not feeling well.

(Hilton, 1973: 33)



2.2.2 TODDLERS (1 TO 3 YEARS)

Toddlers can be unpredictable, too, because they are at an age when they're testing their boundaries, asserting their will, and discovering who they are. They are also highly mobile, and they like to move fast. Their moods are mercurial, and tears can be turned on and off like a faucet.

The good news is that they almost never stay in a bad temper for long. The bad news is that their attention span is exactly one nanosecond. So allow plenty of time for the shoot to accommodate mood shifts, and refreshment and play breaks.

Find ways to photograph them while they're moving and playing rather than trying to get them to sit.

One method I've found useful is to set the child down at the far back corner of the backdrop and have his mother call to him from the front opposite corner. The child will run to his mother, usually smiling all the way.

2.2.3. YOUNG CHILDREN (3 TO 5 YEARS)

This age group is a little cuter than the fodder group. They are old enough to reason with, and they usually want to please you. Their attention spans are a bit longer, and they start to have wild senses of humor. Kids naturally want to please you, so if you invent ways in which they can help you, it makes the photo shoot more than fun for them. (Schneider, 1993: 12)

I ask the kids to help by pushing the button on the light meter, hatching up new, exciting games to play in front at the camera. Helping you gives a child the chance to feel important and to feel that he has some control over the session.

2.2.4 BABIES



From the moment they are born, our children are the most photogenic of all human subjects. Precious and vulnerable, babies are naturally the pride and the joy of their parents, but they grow up fast, which means my pictures of them are all the more important, as souvenirs of their earliest youth.

2.2.5 NEW BORN BABIES

That joyous telephone call announcing the birth of a healthy new grandchild, niece or nephew is an exciting moment to be savored. It is also the signal to pack up your camera and head off for the first meeting. In all the excitement it is easy to forget how overwhelmed the baby must feel, surrounded by blurred shapes, odd smells and noises. Try to avoid startling newborn babies with flash from close range.

2.2.6 TODDLERS

As your child begins to walk and talk, a whole new realm of picture possibilities opens up to you. Picture them making mischief, playing happily with friends and passing the major milestones of growing up as they develop character and personality (Walker, 1993: 26)

Too many good pictures are spoilt because the child moves during the camera's exposure. Luckily, compact cameras are designed to freeze movement with flash when it is dark or with a fast shutter speed in daytime outdoors.

However, if your toddler is one of those hyperactive children who likes to get into lots of mischief all day, everyday, occasionally you will have to find some means of keeping her still for composed rather than candid pictures!

The technique of “trapping” sounds cruel but is perfectly harmless. All you have to do is engineer some way of keeping the child restricted in one place while you take your pictures, for instance:

After a bath, wrap your child in a big bath towel. This will help “frame” her (drawing attention to your child within the broader picture area) and also has the bonus of keeping her arms and legs still for a few moments.

2.2.7 JUNIORS

The years from toddler-hood up to starting secondary school are filled with happy days spent playing with friends and developing a growing sense of independence.

It is often hard to catch your children at home so make the most of those opportunities to follow your creative photographic instincts by setting up fun portrait sessions, one-to-one with your child. (Faber, 1997: 45)

a) STARTING SCHOOL

A child first day in school clothes is one to be cherished- it is about the only time he will ever enjoy wearing them!

The best pictures are to be had as your child first tries the outfit and perhaps the evening before school when there is enough time for him to parade and for you to think about composition, without any pressure or rushing around.

b) QUIET MOMENTS

It is not all high jinks for juniors-sometimes your child will want to sit quietly and read, try his hand at a spot of painting and drawing, or maybe just go fishing with one of his parents.

c) AT HOME

You do not need to live in a palace to take successful pictures of your children at home. It is often the case that the more homely and comfortable the house, the more relaxed the children!

d) IN THE GARDEN

Throughout the warm summer months, your garden is the ideal place to take pictures of the children.

Even during spring and early autumn it provides a naturally light, sunny and colorful environment – a truly cheerful and colorful location that sets just the right mood for photography.

To gain full creative control over your child portraits it is best to plan the picture- taking session in advance, making sure there is plenty of time to set up and that your child is in a relaxed and co-operative mood.
(Walker, 1993: 10)

Teenage subjects can be most difficult, ask them for their own image and styling ideas and help get them into the posing mood with a few of their favorite cassettes playing quietly in the background.

2.3 THE SOCIALISING OF THE CHILD

In the previous section, the emphasis was on interacting with children during a photo-session.

Socialising of the child and other psychological aspects that play a role are discussed in this section. This includes:

1. The socialising of the child
2. The developmental phases of the child

The modern mother is not only a mother at home but has mostly a professional job outside the house and her children are mostly kept in pre-primary schools or a day-care mother take cares of the children.

The most important socialising agent other than the family is the pre-primary school or daycare centre where the child stays every day. Social skills accomplished at pre-primary school are concentrated on a wider horizon than at home. (De Witt & Booysen, 1994: 14)

The child learns what is expected of him or her in class situations, as a learner at school and even as a citizen of the country.

2.3.1 BEACONS IN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

a) One year

- Enjoys social meetings, follows conversations, makes noises.
- Says one or two words with meaning greet, asks questions, says thank you and listens to mother's "no".
- Shows interest in adults and imitates.
- Shows fear of parting.

b) Three to six years

- Very dependent on adults, can depart with mother more easily.
- Friendly but shy of strangers.
- Blames other people.
- Like his or her own gender.
- Understands rules.

2.3.2 DEVELOPMENT PHASES OF CHILD

a) Emotional development

- The child feels wanted and safe and ventures into the world around him or her.
- The child is lead to have control over his or her emotions.

b) Creative development

- The child's creative abilities are developed.
- Creative thinking is improved.
- Child is lead to develop esthetic values.

2.3.3 EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The toddler, at the age of two, reacts spontaneously and shows emotions such as joy, excitement and affection and the child will for instance jump around or run as a result of the excitement.(Louw, 1990: 36)

Fear

Fear is a part of everybody's life, adult or child. It's part of being a human and it is sometimes necessary to lodge self-defence strategies.

Fear therefore, must not be seen as pathological. Fear is in different forms and intensities in toddlers and each one develops his or her own way of handling it.

It has been found that toddlers between the ages of two and five are less afraid of things such as dogs, noise, pain, sudden movements and strange objects. (De Wit & Booysen, 1994: 15)

However, during this period there is an increasing fear of the dark, creatures of the imagination and things that endanger their lives like fire and deep water.

2.3.4 PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF CHILDREN

A Communist said once: "Give me your child in the first five years of his life and I will make him a good communist. In other words, the first five years of children are the most important years of their lives, because all his developments are formed in these years.

2.3.5 THE TODDLER STAGE, AGE TWO TO SIX, IS A CONTINUATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIRST TWO YEARS.

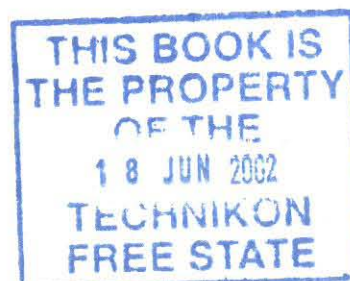
a) Physical development

During the toddler years physical development is slower than during the baby years.

In South Africa, research has proved that Colored, Asian and Black children grow slower between the years of two and adolescence than whites, of the same age. (Louw, 1990: 23)

This can be as a result of specific genetic differences or because there is a relation between the socio-economic status and physical development.

Change in the body is very obvious and the baby changes into a young child. They also lose their teeth to permanent teeth. The brain and nervous system also develop faster than other body parts. At three the brain reaches 75% of its capacity and at six about 90%.



Visually, young children are far-sighted. Because their eyes are not developed completely yet. Objects, which are near to the eye, are focused at a point behind the retina.

Motor skills also improve dramatically during childhood. For example, a four year old can use scissors, build puzzles and paint pictures and a five year old can run, walk, climb, jump and hop with ease.

Some toddlers even start to fasten shoelaces at this age.

b) Cognitive development

Toddler's cognitive development depends on all the information which a child receives through his or her senses, how they interpret it, their activities (motor as well as intellectual), what knowledge they get and what new skills will be taught

The social and cultural context where our toddlers grow up also influences cognitive development.

The cognitive development of the toddler is on a higher level than a baby's but it still has its limitations.

2.3.6 THE DEVELOPMENT OF SEMIOTIC SYMBOLIC FUNCTION

One of the properties of the pre-operational stage is the development of what is called the semiotic of symbolic function which is revealed in symbolic games.

Symbolic thoughts are a new ability which children can do and which enables them to think about objects and happenings which do not take place at that moment.

Therefore at one moment a child plays, with a doll as if it is a baby, or to think about cookies and ask for some cookies without seeing them. An object, a word or a symbol is therefore representative of something that is not present.

a) Illogical thoughts

Toddlers in this stage, don't really think logically, for e.g.

- Toddlers' thoughts are egocentric. They see situations from their own point of reference.
- Toddlers thoughts are irreversible- situation take place in one direction thus they can't think how it will be if you reverse this situation.

- Toddlers have no understanding of what is real and what is not real for example: *Spiderman*.
- They make assumptions that seem quite irrational to adults. It is because toddlers think transductively they reason from one principle to the next, for e.g. It is night, we sleep at night, therefore it is night, so that we can sleep.
- Toddlers believe that lifeless objects are alive, and that they are (conscious).

b) Information

As regards concerns information it can be said that toddlers can not recall incidents as well as their elder brothers and sisters and they can't remember as well either.

c) Emotional Development

The toddler, at the age of two, reacts spontaneously and shows emotions such as joy, excitement and affection and the child will for instance jump around or run as a result of the excitement.(Louw, 1990: 23)

d) Self- concept

Self-concept develops during childhood. Children learn to know themselves, things such as their age and gender.

They also evaluate their qualities with the result that they become proud or shy.

e) Middle Childhood

The stage from the sixth to the twelfth year is known as middle childhood.

It is a stage of relative calmness between the years of fast development up to five years as well as the adolescent years there after. (De Witt & Booysen, 1994: 5)

f) Physical Development

Children of this age have one outstanding feature middle childhood and that is that their arms and legs grow faster than their bodies. Therefore they have a characteristic appearance.



g) Cognitive Development

Children at this stage, spend most of their time at school where they learn to write, read and calculate. They learn more about the world. It is expected of them to remember this and to use all information to solve daily problems.

2.4 INTERVIEWS WITH CHILDREN THAT I PHOTOGRAPHED:

I have photographed children of different ages and at different places. The age of the children differs from seven to twelve years. Most of the children are not older than 13 years. (see examples in Appendix)

I had no problem working with boys or girls. It differs from time to time.

The children I photographed for the interview were three girls.

The aim that I achieved with the interview was to describe the methods I use when working with children when I photographed them; and to explain what I have done with them so that they can trust me as a stranger.

Favourite sites

A favourite site for photographing children is in a natural environment. The ashbin, the orchid-house and on the railway at women's memorial.

Positions

As a child is very active the photographer must think how to use positions that can interest them like on the railway and climbing a tree.

Clothes

Parents like to dress the child up for a photo session but the more comfortably they are dressed the more natural the child looks in the picture for example a boy in his basketball clothes.

Faith in the photographer?

If you treat a child naturally they will have faith in the photographer.

2.5 INTERVIEWS WITH PRE-PRIMARY AND PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

To win a toddler's confidence, I had to bend down to his or her height to be able to have eye contact. One should never speak from above. To gain his or her cooperation, one must make several positive compliments (e.g. You have beautiful shoes.)

Toddlers are very egocentric and you must make him or her believe they are all grown-up. To distract their attention from the photo-session, you should play with them before hand.

Toddlers must be assured that they have nothing to fear, especially when they don't want to co-operate. Do something such as take an old camera to the session and let him or her photograph you first. In this way he or she is practically involved and feels important.

I have found that a positive attitude towards toddlers results in good cooperation. To let a group of toddlers react positively towards a photographer, they must be grouped well e.g. Let an outgoing child stands near a shy one. Don't interfere with their activities- let him do what he prefers- that's how the most natural photos are taken.

2.6 THE CHILD AND HIS OR HER PRIVILEGES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The child of the 21st century is stimulated from before his or her birth with music etc. While a toddler, this stimulation continues.

While early in the 20th century, 5 year olds worked in mines, today's children are computer enthusiasts.

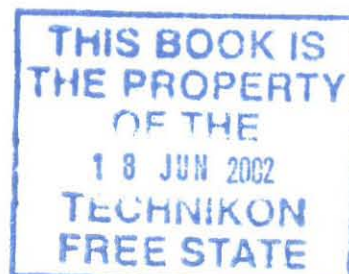
Whilst the 20th, Century children had to sit prim and proper when a photo was taken, today's child acts naturally, it seems as if it is second nature to them.

They pose out of their own free will. In the former centuries children were photographed negatively, because children were not really acknowledged as important.

Today, however, children are photographed "positively" without been forced into unnatural photos.

Mothers constantly keep albums of the child's development.

One wonders how the children of the 25th Century, will look or should one rather ask: Will they still be children?



2.7 EXAMPLES OF OWN WORK

FIGURE 2.7a

In taking this photograph I used a 6x7 medium format camera, with 100 ASA film. The idea behind the image was to capture the little girl's natural appeal, and this was done through soft natural lighting. I used a friend as an example in the pose she took and the little girl fell in to this naturally.

The comparison between this photograph of the author and the work of Lewis Hine, is that Lewis Hine also had children pose for him, but in different circumstances. His children were photographed in the situation of child labour, where they were worked for a small amount of money to survive. The child in this photograph of the author is comfortable in the studio, also posing, because she is a model and may be making money out of the taking of the photograph. This shows the difference between the way children had to grow up in 1937 and how they grow up today, regarding to making money.



Untitled
Source: Own work

FIGURE 2.7b

This image was taken with a 35mm camera, and Ilford XP2. The baby's mother accompanied me when I took this photograph, and she kept the baby pre-occupied, as not to draw her attention too much to me. I used "props" to accomplish more natural images.

It is important when the photographer is photographing a child smaller than two years, for the mother or father to be there, because the child could start to cry if he or she is left with a strange person or persons. The child is more relaxed when the parents are present.

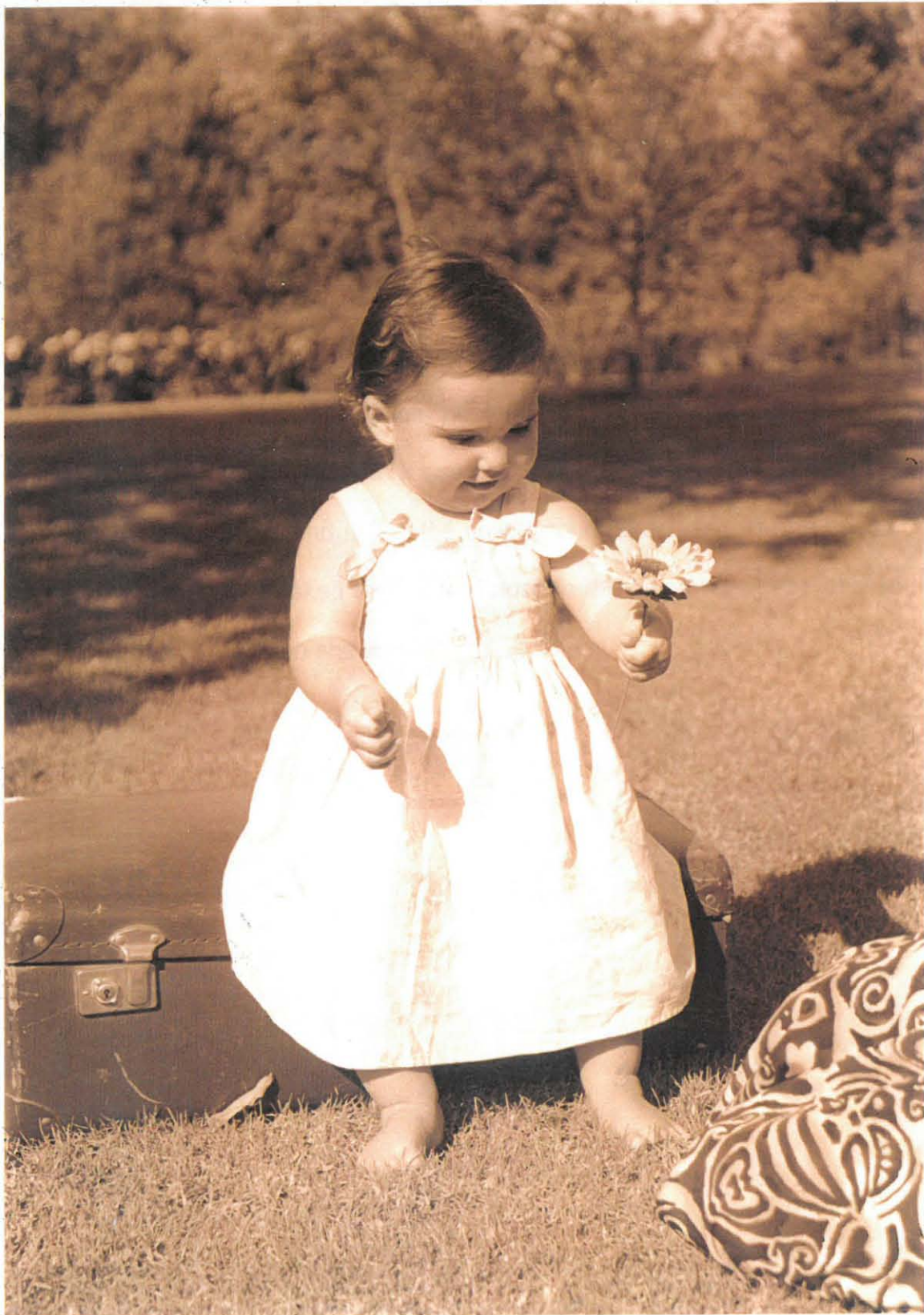


FIGURE 2.7c

This image was taken with a 35mm camera and Ilford XP2 film. The girl was known to me, and so I could create a natural image. The bench, which was already there, was used as a “prop”.

In the development phases of a child, creative thinking development is very important. In taking this photograph, the author was testing the child’s creativity. The author used a plastic toy camera, with which the child was playing, and asked the child to photograph her as she posed. The author then asked the child to pose in the same way to be able to take the photograph she wanted.



FIGURE 2.7d

This image was taken with a 35mm camera, and I used Ilford XP2. The fashionable images of girls and boys kissing or giving each other flowers, inspired me for this image.

Toddlers can be very shy when it comes to the opposite sex and boys and girls would rather not touch each other that easily. The author was at a party and there were two children that weren't shy, and the author asked them to kiss so that she could take a photograph. They rather enjoyed the taking of the photographs, and it made the photographer's job easier. In this case, working with children without inhibitions proved to result in a easier photo session.



United
Source: Own work

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FIGURE 2.7e

This was taken on Agfa 200 ASA film with a 35mm camera. I gave her the film holder and my shoes to play with, because she was difficult, and this helped to calm her down so that I could get a more natural image.

Parents like to dress up their children for photographs, but it is important that the child is always comfortable with the situation. The author gave her shoe to the child to play with and this immediately calmed the child and the author could freely take photographs of the child as she played with the shoe.



FIGURE 2.7f

This image was taken with a 35mm camera, on Ilford XP2 film. This was taken at a party, and was a “candid” image. I was at the right place at the right time.

Toddlers in this stage (at 3-5 years) do not really think logically. This photograph was taken when the boy got a balloon that was tied in shape of a sword. He constantly played with the balloon. Toddler’s thoughts are eccentric, they see situations from their own point of reference and they have no understanding of what is real and what is not real, for example, the child could believe he is a pirate.



FIGURE 2.7g

This was taken on Agfa 200ASA film with a 35mm film. The girl was playing in her backyard and I sneaked up on her and took this natural image.

It is important to photograph children in familiar surroundings, as to attain the most natural pose for the child. This is especially important if the photographer does not know the child. In this photograph the child did not know the photographer. The child was playing outside and the photographer used the situation to photograph the child without her knowing it. This resulted in natural images.



FIGURE 2.7h

This image was taken on Agfa 200 ASA film, with a 35mm camera. I came earlier to this baby's house to play with him and to make him used to me. When this happened, I started taking photographs.

It is important for the photographer to realize that children do not always like strangers, and this could be a disadvantage when taking photographs. In the physical development of the child, a child is taught from a young age to cut and paste things. This is why the photographer came before the photo session to play with the child to gain the child's trust.



CONCLUSION

In this mini-thesis I wanted to show the best ways to go about photographing children. This was done firstly through discussing examples of photographers such as Lewis Hine and Diane Arbus. In my own work I feel that trust from the children's point of view is very important. I gain their trust mainly through allowing them to play with things, such as toy cameras and "props". When they are relaxed I proceed to take photographs. Social development is also discussed to gain greater knowledge of the child's psychology.

The above method is my main approach to child photography, but photographers like Hine and Arbus used, in turn, their own individual approaches. These different approaches make child photography a very versatile type of photography, with many different techniques the photographer can use.

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